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ABSTRACT

The social status of occupations has remained stable over the past four decades. However, much about the concept of occupational prestige has been learned by studies that implicitly assume a masculine context. Because of the extensive social and cultural changes associated with the women's equal rights movement, this study asked questions about how occupational prestige is related to differential views of women's roles of four different groups of women. There is strong agreement among divergent groups on the prestige accorded to different occupations are appropriate for women, with the most conservative group of women sampled holding far more liberal views than many vocational counselors on appropriate occupational roles for women. (Author)

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OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF WOMEN'S ROLES

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Research Report # 9-73

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Abstract

The social status of occupations has remained stable over the past four decades. However, much about the concept of occupational prestige has been learned by studies that implicitly assume a masculine context. Because of the extensive social and cultural changes associated with the women's equal rights movement, this study asked questions about how occupational prestige is related to differential views of women's roles of four different groups of women. There is strong agreement among divergent groups on the prestige accorded to different occupations. However, the same groups show clear differences when asked if the occupations are appropriate for women; and even the most conservative group of women sampled held far more liberal views than many vocational counselors on appropriate occupational roles for women.

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF WOMEN'S ROLES

The prestige hierarchy of occupations has remained remarkably stable over the past four decades. The professions and higher business occupations receive high prestige ranks; the skilled trades, technical occupations and occupations in the distributive field are given intermediate ranks; and the semi-skilled and unskilled occupations are given low ranks. Correlations between occupational prestige scores are typically above .90 when comparisons are made between judges of different sex (Baudler & Paterson, 1948; Welch, 1949; Reiss, Duncan, Hyatt, & North, 1961), age (Krippner, 1961; Simmons, 1962; De Fleur, 1963), and national cultures (Inkeles & Rossi, 1956; Kunde & Davis, 1959; Thomas, 1962). Stability over time is demonstrated by equally high correlations (Deeg & Paterson, 1947; Hutson, 1962; Hodge, Siegel, & Rossi, 1964; Hakel, Hollmann, & Dunnette, 1968). However, Stefflre, Resnikoff, & Lezrotte (1968) crucially note that much about the concept of occupational prestige has been learned by studies that implicitly assume a masculine context. They believe that occupational prestige studies typically do not mention the sex of the worker and the assumption is that the male worker is being considered or that the occupation has a prestige status independent of the sex of the worker.

Women's role in the marketplace has been at issue in the United States since at least the turn of the century. The more recent emergence of a forceful women's equal rights movement gives impetus to questions about how occupational prestige is related to traditional and non-traditional views of women's roles. The present study is an effort to probe some of

those questions, using different samples of women to investigate both their conceptions of the social status of certain occupations and their views on whether those occupations are appropriate for women.

Method

Instrument: The present study closely followed the occupational ranking instructions used by Deeg & Paterson (1946) and Hakel, Hollmann, & Dunnette (1968) who repeated Counts (1925) historic survey of the social status of occupations. The occupations ranked were: Army Captain, Banker, Barber, Carpenter, Civil Engineer, Coal Miner, Ditch Digger, Electrician, Elementary School Teacher, Farmer, Foreign Missionary, Grocer, Hod Carrier, Insurance Agent, Janitor, Lawyer, Machinist, Mail Carrier, Motorman, Physician, Plumber, Soldier, Superintendent of Schools, Traveling Salesman, Truck Driver.

The ranking instructions were mimeographed as follows:

"In most communities certain occupations are accorded a higher rating than others. There is a tendency for us to look up to persons engaged in some occupations and down on those engaged in others. We may even be ashamed or proud of our relatives because of their occupations.

In the following list are occupations which you are to arrange in order of their social standing. After that occupation which is most looked up to, place the number 1; after that which occupies second place in this respect, the number 2, and so on until finally you place the number 25 after that occupation which receives the lowest social rating.

In column B please check whether or not you feel the occupation is appropriate or not appropriate for women.

Use a pencil so you can erase if you want to change your response to any item."

These instructions were followed by the twenty-five (25) occupations from Deeg and Paterson's list in alphabetical order and by an appropriate column and a not appropriate column for each occupation both on a single page.

Subjects: Four diverse samples were used in the study: members of the university's Women's Caucus, an activist group of faculty, staff and student interested in furthering women's rights; a sample of university undergraduates; a sample of classified employees, a group made up of secretarial and clerical personnel; and a sample of non-working women in the community. All Ss were volunteers solicited from classes, organizations and the telephone directory. Returns were obtained from 102 of 115 Women's Caucus members, 107 of 110 women classified employees, 110 of 110 women undergraduates, and 78 of 78 non-working women. The overall return rate was 96%.

The average age of the Women's Caucus group was 28.4 with a range of 21-54, and they averaged 3 years of college education. The average age of the classified employees was 30.2, with a range of 22-52, and they averaged 1 1/2 years of college education. The students ranged from 19-27, with a mean age of 21.1 years and averaged educational level of 3 years of college. The average age of the non-working women was 29.5, with a range of 24-50, and they averaged 2 years of college education.

Procedure: The study posed 2 basic questions: 1) do the four samples differ in the way they rank the prestige of the 25 occupations; and, 2) do the four samples differ in their judgments of which occupations are appropriate for women.

The correlations between the rankings of the 4 samples were determined by computing Kendall coefficients of concordance (Siegal, 1956).

Differences in the four groups' judgments of whether the occupations are appropriate for women were analysed by 17 2x4 Chi-square tests. For the remaining 8 of the 25 occupations, chi-squares could not be computed because too many cells contained zeros. All seven of these were occupations which virtually all the women in the study rated as appropriate for women.

Results

Computation of coefficients of concordance between the 25 rankings of the groups ranged from .94 to .99 and in the way the 4 groups of women ranked the prestige of the 25 occupations showed few differences. Not only were the rankings of the four groups similar to each other, but they also closely resembled the rankings reported by Hakel, Hollmann, and Dunnette in 1967. (See Table 1).

Sharp differences did occur between the 4 groups on the question of whether the occupations were appropriate for women. Results of the 17 tests were analysed at the .05, .01 and .001 levels of significance. Thirteen occupations were rated significantly differently at the .05 level, 11 at the .01 level and 7 at the .001 level. (See Table 2). The Women's Caucus group was most likely to rate an occupation as appropriate for women, followed sequentially by the female students, female classified employees and the non-working women. The latter were usually least likely to rate an occupation as appropriate for women. (See Table 2).

Discussion

The results of this study supports the previous findings of agreement between divergent groups on the amount of prestige accorded to different occupations. However, when the same groups are asked whether the occupations are appropriate for women, clear differences appear. Interestingly,

the differences increase as the occupations decrease in prestige. The four groups of women almost unanimously rated high prestige occupations such as physician, banker and superintendent of schools as appropriate for women but differed significantly on whether medium or low prestige occupations such as traveling salesman or coal miner are suitable for women.

Many of the occupations with the lowest prestige involve manual labor, and this fact may have influenced the judgments of appropriateness. For example, less than half the women in each group felt that ditch digger was an appropriate occupation for women, although a majority of women in all groups felt that janitor was an appropriate occupation for women. Do the differential ratings given these two occupations reflect the women's perceptions about the physical strength required for the occupations or do other factors account for the difference in judgments?

The Women's Caucus members held the most liberal views of which occupations are appropriate, followed closely by the students. The classified employees and the non-working women were more conservative in their judgments of which occupations are suitable for women. (Table 2).

These findings indicate that women tend to agree on the prestige value of given occupations but they differ on questions of whether certain occupations - particularly medium to low status ones - are appropriate for women. This information implies that those doing vocational counseling with females might find it productive to probe this area with their clients in helping them make vocational choices.

Recent studies (Pietrofesa & Schlossberg, 1970; Schlossberg & Pietrofesa, 1973; Thomas & Stewart, 1971), have shown that vocational counselors are often biased in favor of women entering traditional occupations, However,

the results of this study show that the majority of women are not as limited in their perspectives. The four groups of women differ on the degree to which they see occupations as appropriate for women, but more than 50% of each group thought at least 20 of the 25 occupations were suitable for women (Table 1). The 20 occupations included non-traditional vocations for women such as engineer, physician, traveling slaesman, electrician, carpenter and plumber. From the data, it would appear that even the most conservative group of women sampled hold far more liberal views than many vocational counselors on appropriate occupational roles for women.

This is an important finding since many traditional counselors assert that most women agree with the traditional sex-role stereotypes in occupational roles and that only a small and vocal minority of women perceive a need for change in the vocational life of women. The results of this study refute that assertion and indicate that many women hold very non-traditional conceptions of appropriate occupational roles for women.

Another interesting aspect of the findings is that all the women studied felt strongly that the high-status occupations were appropriate for women. The only occupations deemed inappropriate for women by a majority of <u>any</u> group were the five lowest status occupations (Table 1). Traditionally, however, many counselors have encouraged women to enter low status jobs and have not supported their efforts to enter occupations such as physician or engineer which are traditionally "masculine" and which carry the highest status (Schlossberg and Pietrofesa, 1973). Again, it would seem that many vocational counselors are not as liberal in this area as their potential clients.

Future research on occupational prestige might study counselor ratings of occupational appropriateness for women. This would provide a clear comparison of counselor and client views and might help illuminate questions

of counselor bias more clearly. Certainly, counselors should not encourage women to seek any occupational roles which the women themselves do not choose. However, it is particularly important that counselors hold a liberal view of occupational sex-role stereotypes so that they can help all their female clients select occupations suitable for their individual interests and skills.

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Table 1

Social Status Ranks of 25 Occupations

	Rank Order by Hakel, Hollman & Dunnette (1967)	Women's Caucus	Classified Employees	Students	Non-Working Women
Army Captain	8	11	12	10	12
Banker	4	5	4	3	4
Barber	14	17	17	19	18
Carpenter	11	9	10	8	8
Civil Engineer	5	4	3	5	6
Coal Miner	23	22	22	24	25
Ditch Digger	25	25	25	25	24
Electrician	9	7	7	11	9
Elementary School Teacher	6	6	6	7	5
Farmer	19	13	11	13	17
Foreign Missionary	7	8	8	6	7
Grocer	17	15	15	16	11
Hod Carrier	24	23	24	22	23
Insurance Agent	10	10	9	9	10
Janitor	22	24	23	23	20
Lawyer	2	2	2	2	2
Machinist	12	14	13	14	13
Mail Carrier	18	18	16	17	16
Motorman	20	20	20	18	19

Table 1 (Cont'd.)

Social Status Ranks of 25 Occupations

	Rank Order by Hakel, Hollman & Dunnette (1967)	Women's Caucus	Classified Employees	Students	Non-Working Women
Physician	1	1	1	1	1
Plumber	16	12	14	12	14
Soldier	15	19	19	21	22
Superintendent of Schools	3	3	5	4	3
Traveling Salesman	13	16	18	15	15
Truck Driver	21	21	21	20	21

Table 2

Ratings of Occupations' Appropriateness for Women +

Occupation	Mean Rank	Women's Caucus	Students	Classified Employees	Non-Working Women	Chi-Square Value
Physician	1	100%	100%	98%	99%	++
Lawyer	2	100%	100%	96%	100%	++
Superintendent of Schools	3.75	100%	100%	96%	93%	++
Banker	4	100%	100%	95%	94%	++
Civil Engineer	4.5	88%	80%	77%	73%	5.36
Elementary School Teacher	6	100%	100%	100%	100%	++
Foreign Missionary	7.25	100%	100%	100%	98%	++
Electrician	8.5	87%	70%	68%	63%	13.67**
Carpenter	8.75	91%	82%	64%	68%	23.72***
Insurance Agent	9.5	100%	100%	98%	100%	++
Army Captain	11.25	95%	92%	84%	81%	9.4 *
Plumber	13	80%	75%	63%	66%	10.32*
Machinist	13.5	93%	82%	65%	68%	24.78***
Farmer	13.5	96%	84%	76%	72%	18.61**
Grocer	14.25	100%	95%	90%	90%	++
Traveling Salesman	16	86%	85%	73%	67%	13.43**
Mail Carrier	16.75	88%	80%	70%	65%	13.02**
Barber	17.75	95%	90%	86%	84%	4.26

Table 2 (Cont'd.)

Ratings of Occupations' Appropriateness for Women +

Occupation	Mean Rank	Women's Caucus	Students	Classified Employees	Non-Working Women	Chi-Square Value
Motorman	19.25	88%	81%	68%	72%	11.78**
Soldier	20.25	86%	79%	70%	71%	3.27
Truck Driver	20.75	77%	65%	50%	39%	23.34***
Janitor	22.5	82%	70%	69%	64%	6.42
Hod Carrier	23	65%	40%	24%	33%	38.02***
Coal Miner	23.25	91%	62%	22%	35%	107.83***
Ditch Digger	24.75	49%	50%	35%	22%	20.11***

+ Percentage reflects those who feel the occupation is appropriate for women

++ Chi-Square not possible due to small numbers in cells

* p .05

** p .01

*** P .001